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A NEW TRANSLATION FROM THE ORIGINAL GREEK AND HEBREW TEXTS

# THE OLD TESTAMENT

## THE BOOK OF JONA

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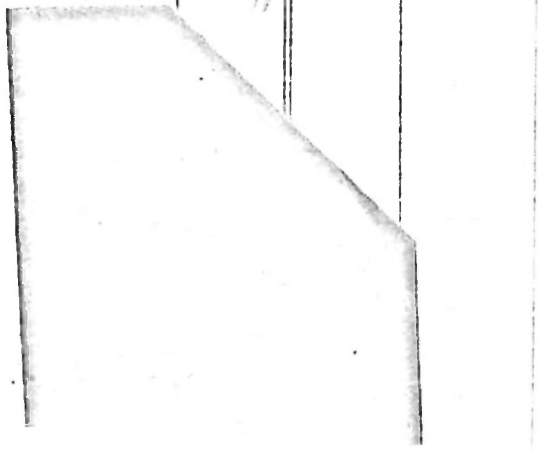

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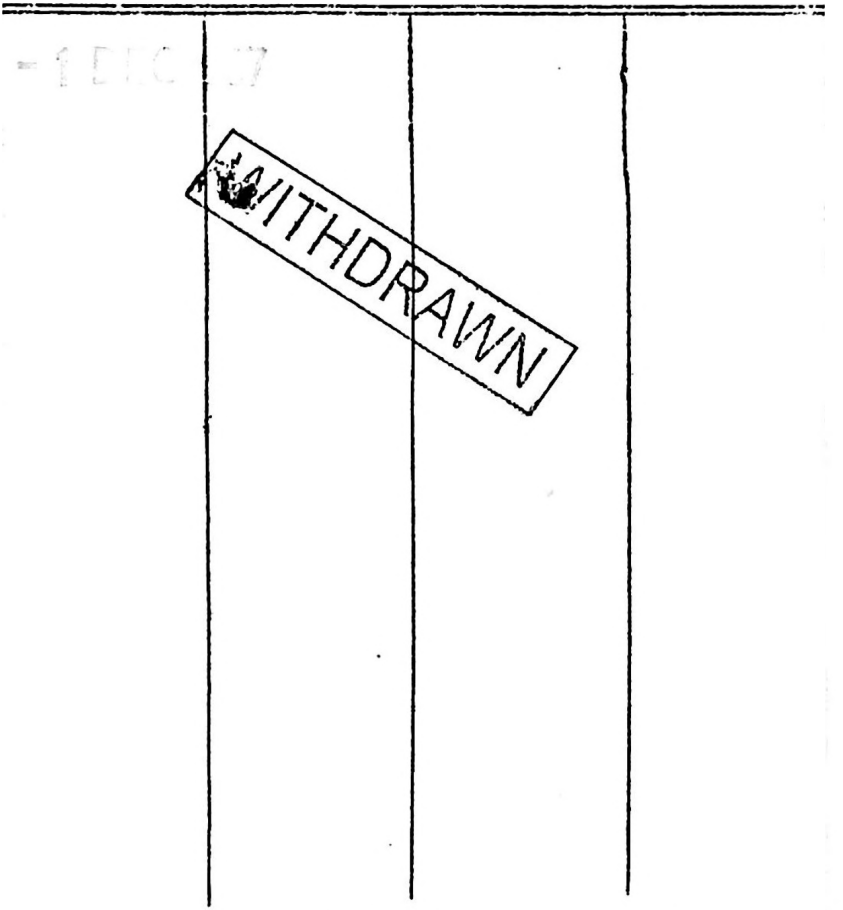


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THE WESTMINSTER VERSION OF
THE SACRED SCRIPTURES

# THE OLD TESTAMENT

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# THE OLD TESTAMENT

## THE BOOK OF JONA

BY

THE REV. T. E. BIRD, D.D., Ph.D.,
*Sometime Professor of Holy Scripture*
*at Oscott College, Birmingham.*

*Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our instruction, that through patience and through the comfort of the scriptures we may have hope.*—Rom. xv. 4.

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Jonas prophesied Christ rather in suffering than in speaking, and that most manifestly in regard to the Passion and Resurrection. For why was he three days in the whale's belly and then let out, but to signify Christ's resurrection from the depth of hell on the third day?

St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, Bk. 18, c. 30.

# PREFACE

## By the General Editor

The General Editor desires to explain that he does not hold himself responsible for the interpretations and opinions adopted by the collaborators. They are understood to accept the general plan of the version, and he holds himself at liberty to make such suggestions as may appear expedient, but (so far as funds at the time allow) he is prepared to publish whatever the collaborators wish, provided that it has passed the proper canonical censorship. He thanks them heartily for their support.

C.L.

# SOME TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

O.T. is used for 'Old Testament'.

M.T. is used for the 'massoretic' or traditional Jewish Hebrew text, which alone has been copied in Hebrew manuscripts, the earliest of which now complete and extant belongs to the beginning of the 11th century A.D.

LXX is used for the 'Septuagint', the oldest Greek translation of the Old Testament, made before the time of Christ by the Jews and used officially by the Greek Christians.

Aquila, a Jewish proselyte, made another and very literal translation in the 1st half of the 2nd century A.D.

Theodotion, also a Jewish proselyte, produced a translation in the 2nd half of the 2nd century A.D., which was probably a free revision of LXX, rather than an independent translation.

Symmachus, probably an Ebionite Christian, produced a translation about the same time, which was probably a revision of Aquila with rather freer renderings, and with the help of LXX and Theodotion.

The 'Vulgate' is the Latin translation of the Bible made for the most part by St. Jerome from the original languages at the end of the 4th and beginning of the 5th centuries A.D. It gradually came to be the official Latin version.

The 'Old Latin' versions are those made before St. Jerome's: they are translations from LXX.

The 'Peshitta' (or 'the Syriac') is the corresponding Syriac version. The New Testament probably dates from the 1st half of the 5th century A.D. The Old Testament is earlier, but probably was not composed at one time or by one author; it was perhaps completed in the 2nd century A.D.

The 'targums' are the Aramaic paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible, finally edited in the 5th century A.D. and afterwards.

D.V. is used for the Douay Version in its present form.

Migne's patrologies are quoted as P.G. (*Patrologia Graeca*) or P.L. (*Patrologia Latina*) with the numbers of the volume and column.

BDB. is used for the *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, edited by F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs (Oxford, 1906).

JTS. for *The Journal of Theological Studies.*

MS. or MSS. for 'manuscript' or 'manuscripts'.

Dict. Apol. for the *Dictionnaire Apologétique de la Foi Catholique*, edited by A. d'Alès, S.J. (Paris, Beauchesne, 5 vols.).

The title of the O.T. books are usually those employed in English for the Hebrew books; and this applies also to the numeration of the Hebrew psalms. (I—II Samuel in the Hebrew = I—II Kings: I—II Kings = III—IV Kings: I—II Chronicles = I—II Paralipomenon: Nehemiah = II Esdras.)

The following works are quoted by the names of the authors only:

(1) Canon van Hoonacker: *Les Douze Petits Prophètes* (Paris, 1908).

(2) Dom Augustin Calmet, O.S.B.: *Commentaire littéral sur tous les livres de l'Ancien et du Nouveau Testament* (1724—1726).

(3) Prof. Julius A. Bewer, Ph.D.: *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jonah.* (In the volume of the International Critical Commentary containing *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and Jonah*, by Mitchell, Powis Smith and Bewer: T. and T. Clark, 1912).

# SUMMARY OF INTRODUCTION


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# INTRODUCTION

## 1. God's Universal Love.

'Is God the God of the Jews only? Is He not the God of the Gentiles also? Yes, He is the God of the Gentiles also' (Rom. iii. 29). That St. Paul found it necessary to write these words sufficiently indicates how alive was the narrow exclusive spirit that put the Gentiles outside the pale of the loving mercy of God even among converted Jews in the middle of the first century A.D. Stronger evidence of its activity is found in the existence of that 'Circumcision Party' that caused so much trouble to SS. Peter and Paul, and which in spite of its condemnation at the Council of Jerusalem, carried on its baneful propaganda for several years (Acts xi onwards). It insisted that no Gentile could come to God except through the door of Jewish legalism. And if converted Jews could have so narrow an outlook, we are not surprised to find it still more restricted among Rabbinic Jews. They summed it up when they hissed at Christ: 'Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil'; for the hated Samaritan stood for the *foreigner*, under the care not of God but of the demons.

Our Lord's teaching was quite clear. When James and John would have fire from heaven to destroy a Samaritan town, He takes occasion to say: 'The Son of Man came not to destroy souls, but to save' (Luke ix. 56); and His kindness to the woman at the well, to the Samaritan leper, His parable of the Good Samaritan, and His instructions for the conversion of all nations, are illustrations of that teaching (John iv: Luke xvii. 16: x. 30: Matt. xxviii. 19, 20: Acts i. 8). Indeed the Kingdom was to be taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles (Matt. xxi. 43).

But to the Jews of His day such teaching was blasphemy.

The close relationship of Israel to God, so exquisitely conceived as it was in many ways, and so productive of a vivid con-

sciousness of God's nearness and love, had, as its dark shadow accompanying it, the exclusion of the 'nations' from God's care and providence and compassion. 'He is mine; and I am His. And inasmuch as He is mine and I am His—Lover and beloved—others are outside the range and glory of that love'. Such would seem to have been the feeling. The strength of the Rabbinic religion was too often its weakness. We see the same limitations in respect of the views of the Rabbis about the life to come. That too was, upon the whole (not by all the Rabbis), regarded as a prerogative of Israel. Idolatry was sin. The nations were idolaters. How, then, could sinners inherit the eternal beatitudes? Many passages illustrate this view. . .[1]

If such was the mind of Israel under the rule of the Romans, how much more must have been the tendency to regard benighted foreigners as unfit for any divine compassion in those times when war threatened or was being waged? And what nation above others must have been hated more than Israel's traditional enemies—the Assyrians? Yet it was through the error of 'not knowing the Scriptures' that this exclusion of the nations from Divine Providence was regarded as a matter of fact and certainty.

In other words, there was no support in Scripture for this exclusiveness. True, some texts from the sacred books, interpreted in a wrong and narrow manner, might suggest that the Gentiles were *ipso facto* beyond salvation; but numerous passages taught Israel quite clearly that God was the God of the Gentiles and not of the Jews only, and that it was Israel's mission to lead the nations to the worship of the one true God. Throughout the sacred books the glorious future of the nations of the whole earth rings out in peal after peal; and Israel is God's chosen instrument to bring about catholicity of religion.

Those who 'looked to the rock whence they were hewn' and who gloried in being 'children of Abraham' should not have been ignorant of the promises made to the patriarch and forgotten that through him all the nations of the world were to be blessed. And in the hymns that they sang at their

[1] C. G. Montefiore in *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings*, p. 75.

Temple they were reminded again and again that Yahwè was the God of the whole world, that the nations were to be brought to the true religion, and that Israel was to lead them to God. Of the four texts that St. Paul uses in Rom. xv, two are from the Psalter:

> Therefore will I praise thee among the Gentiles,
> And will sing to thy Name (xviii. 50).
>
> Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles,
> Laud him, all ye people (cxvii. 1).

To these we may add Ps. cii. 16, 23:

> And the nations shall fear the Name of Yahwè,
> And all the kings of the earth thy glory . . .
> When peoples gather together,
> And kingdoms to serve Yahwè.

And especially those two psalms of magnificent catholicity, *viz.*, lxxii and lxxxvii. In the former the Messianic King is to come with peace:

> And he shall have dominion from sea to sea,
> And from the River unto the ends of the earth.
> The kings of Tarshish and of the isles will bring gifts;
> Kings of Sheba and Saba will offer presents.
> Yea, all kings shall worship him,
> All nations shall serve him.
> May his Name be blessed for ever!
> May his Name remain as long as the sun!
> In him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed,
> All nations shall speak well of him.

In the latter all nations are shown to belong to the God of Sion:

> I may mention Rahab and Babylon as them that know me:
> Lo! Philistia, and Tyre, and the Ethiopians:
> This man was born there.
> Yea, of Sion it may be said,
> Every man was born there!

See also Pss. ii. 8—12: xxii. 26—32.

The prophets also clearly foretold the conversion of the Gentiles through the instrumentality of Israel. Isaiah's beautiful 'Servant Songs' come at once to mind:

Behold my Servant, whom I support;
My chosen One, in whom my soul delighteth.
I have put my spirit upon him:
He shall bring forth judgement to the Gentiles.
He shall not cry out, nor lift up,
Nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.
A bruised reed he shall not break,
And a dimmed wick he shall not quench:
He shall bring forth judgement in truth.
He shall not grow dim nor break
Until he have set judgement on the earth;
And the isles shall wait for his law.
Thus saith God Yahwè,
He that created the heavens and stretched them out,
He that spread out the earth and that which cometh out of it,
He that giveth breath to the people upon it,
And spirit to them that walk therein:
'I Yahwè have called thee in justice,
And hold thee by the hand,
And have kept thee, and have given thee as a covenant of the people,
For a light of the Gentiles . . .' (xlii. 1—6).

Then follows (10—13) the magnificent New Song in which all the peoples of the earth are called upon to join in a mighty *Te Deum* of catholic praise.

Other references to God's universal rule and providence are found in Isai. xlv. 5—8, 18, 22—24: lvi. 6—8: lxv. 1: lxvi. 19—24. We may give one at length from the second of the 'Servant Songs' (xlix). The mission of the Servant, to bring all the world to God, is again made quite clear. He begins by addressing the distant Gentile peoples:

Listen, ye isles, unto me,
And hearken, ye peoples far away.
Yahwè hath called me from the womb,
From my mother's belly he hath mentioned my name.

And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword;
In the shadow of his hand he hath hidden me.
And he hath made me a polished arrow;
He hath hidden me in his quiver.
And he said unto me: 'Thou art my Servant,
(Israel),[1] by whom I will glorify myself'.

. . . . .

And he said unto me: 'It is too light for thee as my Servant
(Only) to raise up the tribes of Jacob,
And to restore the dispersed of Israel;
Wherefore I will make thee also a light for the Gentiles,
To carry my salvation to the end of the earth'.

Other prophets besides Isaiah tell of God's love for the Gentile nations and their conversion to Him. Thus Zechariah ii. 15 (Heb.) speaks of the Messianic times when 'many nations shall join themselves to Yahwè in those days, and they shall be my people; and I will dwell in their midst'.

Again:

Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Until peoples come and the inhabitants of populous cities; and the inhabitants of one (city) shall go to another, saying: We must go and entreat the favour of Yahwè, and to seek Yahwè of hosts. I certainly will go. And many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek Yahwè of hosts in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favour of Yahwè. Thus saith the Lord of hosts: In those days ten men of all the languages of the nations shall take hold, yea, shall take hold of the skirt of one that is a Jew, saying: We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you (viii. 20—23).

Again:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion;
Shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem:
Behold thy King cometh unto thee,
The just and saviour.
He is lowly and riding upon an ass,
Even upon a colt, the foal of an ass.

[1] This word 'Israel' seems to many scholars best omitted, but the question need not be discussed here.

And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim,
And the horse from Jerusalem;
And the bow for war shall be cut off;
And he shall speak peace unto the nations.
And his rule shall be from sea to sea,
And from the River even to the ends of the earth
(ix. 9—10).

The same theme is found also in Micah iv. 1 and Malachy i. 5, 11—14.

Yet all these passages *foretell* the bringing of the Gentiles to the love of the true God. But what of God's attitude to these people before the Messianic conversion? We have to turn to the Book of Wisdom for the wide outlook:

Thou hast mercy upon all, because thou canst do all things, and overlookest the sins of men for the sake of repentance. For thou lovest all things that are, and hatest none of the things which thou hast made. For thou didst not make anything, hating it. And how could anything endure, if thou wouldst not? or be preserved, if not called by thee? But thou sparest all because they are thine, O God, who lovest souls (xi. 24 ff.).

But no part of the Old Testament brings out God's universal love so vividly as the little book which we know as Jona. Here it is shown that God is not the God of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles; yea, even of that Gentile nation hated so intensely by the Jews—the Assyrian nation. Hence it is that the Book of Jona is one of the most important books of the Old Testament.

## 2. Jona.

Outside this prophecy and passages that refer to it we find the name Jona (*Yona*='dove') only in II Kings xiv. 25. There it is stated that Jeroboam restored the boundary of Israel 'according to the word of Yahwè, God of Israel, which he spoke by his servant Jona, son of Amittay, the prophet from Gath-hefer'.[1] Comparing these words with

[1] This place is mentioned in Jos. xix. 13 as situated in the territory of Zabulon. St. Jerome identifies it with a place called Diocæsarea not far from Tiberias (*Com. on Jonas:* P.L. 25. 1119). Moderns favour Meshed, three miles north-east of Nazareth.

those that open the prophecy ('Now the word of Yahwè came unto Jona, the son of Amittay'), it seems clear that one and the same person is meant in both passages. If so, the subject of the prophecy must have been alive before Jeroboam II (c. 789—749) restored the boundary of Israel; and although some writers have thought that he lived *before* the reign of Jeroboam, the more natural interpretation would make him a contemporary.[1] Obviously he was a subject of the Northern Kingdom. We know nothing more about him except what we read in the prophecy.[2]

## 3. Contents.

Although this book is placed among the prophetical writings of the Old Testament, it differs entirely from them. For whereas these other writings give oracles of the prophets, this book is a narrative; and the only thing that the prophet foretells (that Nineveh shall be destroyed after forty days) does not actually happen. The essential teaching (prophetical in the wider sense) is given in one verse, the last in the book.

The contents are easily divided into two sections, the first and the second mission of Jona.

Jona is told by Yahwè to go on a preaching mission to Nineveh. Fearing the task, he decides to avoid it; and going to Jaffa, boards a boat going in the opposite direction—to Tarshish in Spain. There is a storm at sea. The sailors attribute it to the anger of some god. In order to find out who has offended the divinity they cast lots. Jona is discovered, and confessing that he is the culprit, at his own request is thrown overboard. A great fish swallows him. He is in the fish's belly three days, sings a canticle there, and eventually is vomited out on to dry land (i—ii).

[1] St. Jerome mentions a Jewish tradition that makes Jona the son of the woman of Zarephath, the boy raised to life by Elias (*ibid.*, col. 1118).

[2] The Arabs show his tomb at Tell Nabi Yûnis, opposite Môsul, on the left bank of the Tigris. St. Jerome saw tombs of Jona at Diocæsarea and at Lydda. No reliance can be placed on any of these locations.

A second time Jona is ordered to Nineveh, and he obeys the call. In the streets of the great city he preaches its doom. The king and his people are moved to repentance and undertake a great fast. God's anger is appeased and the city is spared; whereupon Jona, seeing that his prediction has been nullified, becomes irate and petulant. God teaches him a lesson. A gourd grows up suddenly to shelter Jona from the heat of the sun, for which the prophet is most grateful. But the next day the plant is eaten up by a canker-worm and withers away, and a scorching wind afflicts him grievously. The moral is drawn. Jona was glad to be shaded from the heat of the sun, and he was grieved when the shelter was taken away. Would he then wish that the heat of divine anger should consume the population of the great city of Nineveh (including little children) rather than that the torment be averted? (iii—iv.)

## 4. Author.

Although the prophecy is concerned solely with Jona's missions, nowhere is it explicitly stated that he wrote the account himself. Ancient commentators saw no reason to deny that he was the author; but modern writers are inclined to bring the book well into the fifth or even into the third century B.C., a long time after the life of the prophet of Jeroboam's reign. The arguments, however, are not so strong that they compel the assent of the wary critic. The use of the third person in a book is no proof against autobiography. Dating a book by vocabulary is becoming more and more difficult when the language is Hebrew; and so-called Aramaisms cannot both indicate recent date and crop up in the 'oldest' portions of the Old Testament. There may be irony in Jona and the prophet himself may be anything but a hero, but a *non sequitur* must be claimed if the man had a divine mission. Truth is more precious to such a man than self-advertisement. For our part we are prepared to leave the date of publication open until clearer evidence comes to light. The description of Nineveh—at the

height of its power—given in the book well accords with the Nineveh of the time of Jeroboam II. But if stress is to be laid on the statement 'Nineveh *was* a great city' (iii. 3), a date subsequent to the overthrow of the city in 612 B.C. would be required. Nevertheless, even here it is questionable whether the author (if he lived in the 5th, 4th, or 3rd century) would have chosen to put before his readers a city long ago destroyed.

## 5. Historical Value.

### (a) the literary form.

Did the writer of Jona invent his story or relate facts? The answer is not so apparent as liberal critics on the one hand and extreme conservatives on the other would have us believe. It is not a matter of deciding whether a man could be kept alive after being swallowed by a great fish, whether Nineveh would have listened to the preaching of an obscure stranger, or whether a plant could suddenly grow tall and as suddenly wither away. Of course these extraordinary happenings settle the question for the modern unbeliever, as they did for rationalists in the days of St. Augustine. *Quid sentire debemus de Jona, qui dicitur in ventre ceti triduo fuisse?* For, he adds: *hoc genus quaestionis multo cachinno a paganis graviter irrisum animadverti* (Letter 102: P.L. 23. 382). And Theophylact: *Devoratur ergo a cete Jonas, tresque dies ac totidem noctes in eo permanet vates; quae res omnem excedere fidem audientibus videtur, maxime eis qui a Graecorum scholis sapienteque doctrina ad hanc historiam accedunt* (Enar. in Jonam ii. 1: P.G. 126. 931). Augustine replies that unless one rules out miracles altogether, there is no reason for denying a miracle here. And, indeed, there are a number of miracles in the sacred books that bear affinity to those recounted in Jona: the sudden blossoming and almond-bearing of Aaron's rod: the withering of the barren fig-tree: the sudden calming of the sea at the word of Christ: the three children in the fiery furnace: the coming of Lazarus from the tomb after four days' interment: and,

of course, the Resurrection of Our Lord. No Christian denies that these are given as actual events in historical books. The question, therefore, that the believer has to decide in the Book of Jona is not whether what is related there could possibly have taken place, but rather in what *genre* of literature the author was writing. Let us begin with the canticle in c. ii. There is not a word in it about the fish. It is a thanksgiving-psalm of one who was in danger of drowning. He speaks of the sea and of the waves (ii. 4, 6), he appears to be sinking to the bed of the ocean (ii. 7). Nothing in the hymn corresponds to the situation of a man swallowed by a fish. Here, therefore, we have one of those votive psalms recited in the Temple after a vow of pilgrimage and thanksgiving, should one be rescued from dire straits.[1] And we are forced to conclude that either the author has incorporated a votive hymn into his book, or else that Jona himself thanks God simply for being saved from drowning. If the latter is the case, then, provided that the book is historical, is it not probable that Jona was unconscious or *even dead* when swallowed by the fish? Do not such expressions as, 'I cried out from the belly of Sheol', and 'I went down . . . into a land whose bolts are eternal locks; yet thou didst bring my life up from the pit' (ii. 3, 7), suppose that the prophet was near to death, or had actually died, and was brought to life again? And is not this what Christ means when He gives the 'sign of Jona' as an illustration of His own death and Resurrection?[2] Certainly if this is the truth of what happened to Jona, the only real obstacle that many find to believing that the book is historical would be removed.

Those who refuse to accept the book as a record of fact try to find parallel accounts in fictitious literature; or they declare that the narrative is too extravagant to be real; or else they see symbolism or allegory in the account.

Of course there are mythological and 'fairy' tales of persons being devoured by a fish, a dragon, a bear, or a wolf. But when these stories are read alongside Jona only a mind

[1] See my article in *Dublin Review*, July, 1928, pp. 95 ff.
[2] On ii. 2 see the commentary.

already made up will say that the latter belongs to the same kind of literature as the former; and it betokens a lack of acumen to lump all these together as 'Jona-stories'. The classical myths of Andromeda and Hesione, the dragon-myth of Babylonia, the story of Arion the musician flinging himself overboard and carried on the dolphin's back to Taenarum, and similar tales, have no more influenced the writer of Jona than, say, the story of Red Riding Hood.

### (b) THE HISTORICAL DIFFICULTIES.

True it is that there is a rapid succession of extraordinary events in the book; and also there is a lack of definition where we might sometimes at least expect it: the fierce storm; Jona's sleep; the lots; the request to be thrown overboard; the immediate calm; the sea-monster swallowing Jona; the vomiting, not into the sea, but on to dry land. Where was the shore on to which he was landed? How did he get to Nineveh? Why is the name of the king of Nineveh not given? Why no mention of this extraordinary mission in the historical Books of Kings and Chronicles or on the monuments? How account for the wonderful success of the mission? In what language did he preach? How long did the conversion last? What of the sudden growth of the plant? and of its as sudden disappearance? What about Jona's return home? All these queries to less than forty verses of the Bible suggest to some commentators that we have an *extravaganza* which the sacred writer did not mean to be accepted as fact.

Other difficulties are felt from the Nineveh side of the picture. How reconcile Nineveh's conversion with the fierce denunciations of the other Hebrew prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Nahum? And is it conceivable that proud Nineveh should abandon its gods and goddesses after the few days' preaching of an obscure foreigner? But some of these questions seem merely captious; others might be asked even if the book was meant to be fiction; others again lose sight of the fact that a special divine providence is insisted on through-

out the narrative. Nor must we suppose what the author does not state. It is not said that Jona preached the Jewish religion to the Ninevites. He does not mention 'Yahwè' at all. We are not told that the people gave up their religion. They simply did penance for their sins. Like other polytheists they believed in a supreme God. Whether they regarded this God as the same as the foreigner's God or not we are not told. What happened at Nineveh is all summed up in Our Lord's words: 'They did penance at the preaching of Jona'.

### (c) OUR LORD'S WORDS.

It may be fitting here to ask whether Christ regarded the book as historical or not. Needless to say, He in whom 'dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporally' could not be deceived in this matter. The gospel passages read as follows in the Westminster Version:

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying: Master, we would seek a sign from thee. But he answered and said to them: A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh for a sign, and a sign shall not be given it, except the sign of Jonah the prophet. For as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, even so shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. The men of Nineveh shall rise up at the judgement with this generation and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold there is more than Jonah here! (Matt. xii. 38—41.)

A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh for a sign, and a sign shall not be given it, except the sign of Jonah (Matt. xvi. 4).

And as the crowds were gathering together unto him, he began to say: This generation is a wicked generation: it seeketh a sign, and a sign shall not be given it, except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, even so shall the Son of Man be to this generation. The queen of the south shall rise at the judgement with the men of this generation and shall condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, there is more than Solomon here! The men of Nineveh shall rise up at the judgement with

this generation and shall condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, there is more than Jonah here! (Luke xi. 29—32.)

Comparing the accounts in Matthew and Luke, certain non-Catholic writers hasten to the conclusion that Our Lord never spoke of Jona as inside the fish: the 'sign' was simply the conversion of the Ninevites typifying the conversion of the Gentiles to Christ. All then that one has to do is to regard Matt. xii. 40 as either an interpretation of the Evangelist or an early interpolation into the text. But this cutting of the knot gives no satisfactory solution. For if there was one certain 'sign' that Our Lord appointed as proof of His divine Mission, that sign was His Resurrection from the dead (Luke xxiv. 46: Matt. xxvii. 63: Mark viii. 31: John ii, 19: xii. 32, 33: I Cor. xv. 4, *etc.*). Indeed 'to be a witness of His Resurrection' (Acts i. 22) was an essential qualification for the apostleship (*cf.* Acts ix. 27—Saul had seen the Risen Lord); and the whole foundation of the apostolic preaching rested on the sign or miracle of the Resurrection. St. Paul summed this up when he said, 'If Christ is not risen again, then is our preaching vain; and your faith is vain also' (I Cor. xv. 14); a statement to which every one of the apostles would subscribe. The 'sign', therefore, that Our Lord gave to His questioners *must* have been the sign of His Resurrection; no answer would really have been given had He simply said that on the Day of Judgement the Ninevites would rise up against Jewish unbelievers; for He promises a sign to the wicked generation listening to Him there and then. Nor can we read into St. Luke's passage something that Christ does not say. He does not say that the conversion of the Ninevites is a sign of the conversion of the Gentiles through the preaching of the gospel; but, simply, 'Jona was a sign to the Ninevites'; which can only be explained by the additional words preserved in St. Matthew; with the further implication that the Ninevites heard and believed that Jona had been in the fish's belly three days and three nights. And, of course, those who explain the 'sign' by the conversion of the pagans, and at the same time admit

that Christ was referring to an historical event, can hardly bisect Jona, holding that the fish episode is fictitious and the conversion of the Ninevites actual fact. And if we ask what was the opinion of the audience which Christ addressed, it seems beyond doubt that the book was regarded as historical: see Tobias xiv. 4, 8 (text of Cod. B): III Maccabees vi. 8: Josephus, *Ant.* ix. 10.

Yet there are many conservative scholars, Catholic as well as non-Catholic, who do not find in Our Lord's words any cogent argument in favour of the historical view. Some there are who say that Our Lord simply took what the Jews regarded as history and used it as a sign of His Resurrection without disturbing their wrong notion. But for the Master to use such a method of teaching would hardly be seemly; and since the publication of the Encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitus* a Catholic can scarcely have recourse to this way of escape. Others avoid this danger. Thus van Hoonacker writes:

> In our opinion it is beside the point to inquire whether Jesus could accommodate Himself to an error commonly held in His time and among His hearers. Rather it is a question of what scholastic logicians call *suppositio terminorum*. Jonas in the belly of the fish served as a term of comparison with Jesus three days in the bowels of the earth. Jonas thrown on to the shore served as a term of comparison with Jesus rising from the dead. The Ninevites converted by the preaching of Jonas afforded a sign or argument against the perverse and unbelieving generation to whom Christ preached (*Les Douze Petits Prophètes*, p. 321).

Of course it is quite true that in our ordinary speech we often make comparisons between real and fictitious persons, likening this one or that to an unhistorical person, either in Sacred Scripture ('Good Samaritan', 'Prodigal Son') or in fiction ('Lady Macbeth', 'Hamlet', 'Micawber'). It is pointed out that when in the Office of the Dead the Church prays that the soul may find rest *cum Lazaro quondam paupere*, there is no intention of supposing that the Parable of Dives and Lazarus related strictly historical events. Other examples are given from Scripture, *e.g.*, Jannes and Jambres resisting Moses are compared to the

heretics that resist the truth; yet this does not suppose that Jannes and Jambres were names of actual persons (II Tim. iii. 8): Melchisedech is compared to the Son of God inasmuch as he was 'without father, without mother', *etc.*, yet, actually, he had parents (Heb. vii. 3): Jude 14 speaks of Enoch as 'the seventh from Adam', as many may well have believed in those days, but which is certainly not taught by St. Jude. In all these cases, it is pointed out, the term of comparison does not demand the historical sense.

To the objection that the Ninevites could not rise up at the Judgement to condemn unbelieving Jews (as Christ clearly states that they will) if the story of Jona is merely fiction, Père Condamin (*Dict. Apol.*, Vol. II, col. 1555) replies:

> We must not press the meaning of the expression 'they will rise up', otherwise we would be forced to do the same with the next expression 'and will condemn them'. The sentence of condemnation will not come from the Ninevites, nor from the Queen of Sheba. The meaning is the same as that in Wisdom iv. 16 (where the same verb κατακρίνειν is employed): 'the just that is dead shall condemn the wicked that are living'. It is the *example* of the Ninevites which will condemn—not they in person. Now the *example* holds good supposing that Jona is a parable; for it is given by God in an inspired book as a lesson. Moreover it can serve as a *type* of actual conversions produced in analogous circumstances.

## (d) EXEGETICAL TRADITION.

Several Catholic scholars of repute agree with Père Condamin in regarding the book rather as a moral tale than as an historical document. We may mention van Hoonacker, *Les Douze Petits Prophètes*: Gigot, *Introduction to O.T.*: Lesêtre in *Revue Pratique d'Apologétique*, 1909, pp. 923 ff.

Of the ancient commentators mention is made of St. Gregory Nazianzen, who appears to approve of the opinion of an unnamed commentator who interpreted the book allegorically (P.G. 35. 505—508). Theophilact also refers with favour to this interpretation (P.G. 126. 960). St.

Jerome implies that the character of the book was disputed by Latin and Greek writers: he himself, however, takes the historical sense.[1]

If it is urged on the other hand that all the other Fathers and early ecclesiastical writers accepted the prophecy as historical, the reply is given that this should not settle the question today. The matter is not one of faith or morals—where the unanimous consent of the Fathers yields a certain conclusion. One cannot draw an argument from the teaching of the Fathers on questions which they neither studied nor taught; and the many literary and historical problems which modern discoveries have opened out were never in the minds of these learned and saintly writers. They knew nothing of Assyriology and of the history which the monuments have revealed to us today. Hence it is that the Biblical Commission, while urging a prudent conservatism, did not deem it impossible that solid arguments might be found to prove that a sacred writer did not intend to narrate history properly so called, but under the guise of history wrote a parable or allegory (Decree of June 23, 1905). This ruling supposes that what in the past was regarded as historical may perhaps in the future be proved by solid arguments to belong to another class of literature.

## (e) NON-HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS.

Before we consider the allegorical interpretation, we may hint at another possible solution that up to the present does not seem to have had the attention it deserves. Is the narrative the result of a dream? That prophecy could come by dream is stated in Numbers xii. 6: 'If there be a prophet among you, I Yahwè will make myself known unto him in a vision; I will speak with him in a dream'; and the Scriptures give a number of revelations by dreams: Abimelech, Jacob, Laban, Joseph, Solomon, Daniel, and Joseph (the

[1] *Scio veteres ecclesiasticos tam Græcos quam Latinos super hoc libro multa dixisse et tantis quæstionibus non tam aperuisse quam obscurasse sententias* (Prol. in Jonam, P.L. 25. 1117).

husband of Our Lady). Granting the possibility, is there anything in Jona that makes the dream interpretation probable? Certainly the rapid series of extraordinary happenings, with the absence of relevant details, reminds one of the structure of a dream. Then there is the strange remark in i. 5 that Jona *fell into a deep sleep*. This peculiar sleep (*tardema*) is mentioned about a dozen times in the Old Testament. In Prov. x. 5: xix. 15 it means lethargy (but in both places LXX reads a different word). In Gen. ii. 21 it refers to the deep sleep into which God cast Adam, and during which (presumably) the origin of woman from man was revealed to him. In Gen. xv. 12 it is employed of the strange sleep during which the going down into Egypt and the Exodus were revealed to Abraham. Judges iv. 21 is a difficult text. As Sisera was already asleep, the word can hardly refer to his going to sleep; it must mean that the blow on his temple made him unconscious (see Cod. B: *καὶ αὐτὸς ἐξεστὼς ἐσκοτώθη καὶ ἀπέθανεν*). In I Sam. xxvi. 12 and Isai. xxix. 10 it is 'a deep sleep of Yahwè'; and again the divine intervention is seen in Ps. lxxvi. 6, where it means either stupor or even death. Twice in Job (iv. 13: xxxiii. 15) the word occurs; first in connexion with Eliphaz' vision, and then in Elihu's speech, where he speaks of God instructing men by dreams and visions. Finally, twice in Daniel the 'deep sleep' is associated with prophetical revelation: in viii. 18, in the vision of the ram and the he-goat; and in x. 9, in the final vision.

May we not then suppose that Jona's *tardema* was not a natural sleep (indeed, how could it be? the terrible gale, the ship almost going to pieces, the sailors panic-stricken, cargo being hurled overboard!), and that it was during this strange sleep that the prophet had a dream or vision of what is subsequently narrated in the book? At least this interpretation deserves consideration and should not be lightly set aside.

We do not think that the allegorical interpretation rests on a solid foundation; but as it is upheld by some commentators we must briefly outline the argument.

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*Jona* means 'dove'; but 'the Dove' was one of Israel's titles. Thus, in Ps. lxviii. 14, the slackers are exhorted to exert themselves to fight for Israel:

> [Shall] the wings of the Dove [be] covered with silver?

Hosea (vii. 11) likens Ephraim to 'a silly dove'; and in xi. 11 the people are represented as returning from Assyria timidly 'like a dove'. In the difficult title of Ps. lvi the LXX and targum seem to have understood the 'dove' of the Hebrew text as synonymous with the 'people' [1]; and in late Rabbinic literature Israel is symbolized as a dove.[2] Fastening on to this symbol, the upholders of this interpretation read the book as follows: The Dove (Israel) has a mission from Yahwè to preach to the Gentiles. For neglecting this mission, Israel is punished—waters going over one's head being a common figure for punishment or tribulation: *cf.* Pss. xviii. 12: xxxii. 6: lxvi. 12: Isai. xliii. 2: Lam. iii. 54, *etc.* Some would say that this punishment was the swallowing of the Dove by the great Fish of Babylon. In answer to prayer during the Babylonian Captivity, Israel was vomited back to Canaan, where it really began its mission to the Gentiles, but with such ill grace that God (or the writer of the book) was far from pleased with the Dove. Hence further troubles for Israel (indicated by the scorching sun and the withering of the plant) to combat its nationalism, and to teach it that Yahwè was a compassionate God even towards the heathen.

But this fanciful method of reading the book is far from convincing. The 'hero' is not simply *Jona* (Dove) but 'Jona the son of Amittay'. Many features of the first voyage are left unexplained: the ship manned by pagans in danger of being wrecked; the throwing of the cargo overboard; the pagan captain calling on the Hebrew to get him to prayer; the casting of lots; the compassion of the sailors; their unwillingness to cast Jona (Israel) overboard; their

[1] Compare the Gallican Psalter: *pro populo qui a sanctis longe factus est* with St. Jerome's Hebrew Psalter: *pro columba muta eo quod procul abierit.*

[2] References in *Enc. Biblica*, col. 2567 (note 2), and Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. I, p. 287.

sacrifices and vows; the stilling of the sea once Jona (Israel) is flung to the waves. Moreover, nothing in the canticle suggests the truth of this allegorical interpretation. No, this hypothesis is the weakest of all (except Cheyne's recourse to a nature-myth of the Babylonian dragon, which, in this prophecy, has degenerated into a great fish). Finally, we have to remember that the book was written for Hebrew readers; yet there is not a shred of evidence that any Jew read it as an allegory.

## (f) CONCLUSION.

Of the four possible interpretations of the Book of Jona —literal, parabolic, dream, allegorical—the last-named may be ruled out. The other three have each something attractive. But maybe the most probable after all is the simple historical interpretation.

It would seem that Providence had raised up this prophet expressly to prove by him the most incredible truth of our religion—the Resurrection of Our Saviour. God willed to give us not a simple figure of this fact, but a striking and real proof, in the miraculous deliverance of Jonas coming forth full of life from the belly of the fish after being there three days and three nights. . . And what makes the memory of Jonas more precious is that among the prophets of the Old Testament he alone was given a mission to preach to the Gentiles. The conversion of the Ninevites was, as it were, a token and the assurance of the future conversion of infidels to the Faith and the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ on the ruins of the Synagogue (Calmet, *Préface sur Jonas*).

*Postscript.*—While this book was in the press, Father W. McEntegart, Professor of Cosmology and Physics at Heythrop College, kindly supplied the following quotation, which confirms the physical possibility of a whale swallowing a man, and that in the Mediterranean:

A well-authenticated report of a whale in whose stomach a ten-foot shark was found intact, besides furnishing additional in-

formation of the range of creatures included in this whale's diet, furnishes the most positive evidence of its capacity to swallow a mass which must have exceeded the proportions of a fully-grown man. To those who are interested in the story of the prophet Jonah it is noteworthy that the Sperm Whale is known to occur in the Mediterranean.[1]

[1] *Giant Fishes, Whales and Dolphins*, by Norman and Fraser. (London, Putnam, 1937): Part II, *Whales and Dolphins*, by F. C. Fraser, B.Sc., F.Z.S., Assistant Keeper, Department of Zoology, British Museum (Natural History), p. 262.

The whale referred to is the Sperm Whale or Cachalot (*Physeter catodon*).

## SUMMARY OF TEXT

CHAP. I: JONA'S VOYAGE.

CHAP. II: JONA'S CANTICLE.

CHAP. III: THE REPENTANCE OF THE NINEVITES.

CHAP. IV: JONA'S DISCONTENT.

# THE BOOK OF JONA

## Chap. I.

### JONA'S VOYAGE

I.

Now the word of Jehovah came unto Jona the 1
son of Amittay, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that 2
great city, and denounce it; for their wickedness is
come up before me'.

And Jona arose to flee to Tarshish from the 3
presence of Jehovah; and he went down to Joppa,
where he found a ship about to go to Tarshish; and
he paid the fare, and went on board, with the inten-
tion of going with them to Tarshish from the presence
of Jehovah.

But Jehovah hurled a great wind upon the sea, 4
so that there was a great storm at sea; and the ship
was in danger of being broken in pieces. And the 5
mariners were afraid, and cried out every man unto
his god; and they hurled the ship's cargo into the sea,
to lighten it unto them. But Jona had gone down to
the hold of the vessel; and he lay down and was
sound asleep.

And the captain came to him, and said unto him, 6
'What art thou doing, sound asleep? Arise, call
upon thy God! Perhaps the God will give a thought
to us, that we perish not'.

And they said every one to his mate, 'Come, let 7
us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this
disaster is upon us'.

8 And they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jona. And they said to him, 'Tell us, we beg of thee: What is thy business? And whence comest thou? Of what country art thou? And what is thy nationality?'

9 And he said unto them, 'I am a Hebrew. And I fear Jehovah, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land'.

10 Then were the men greatly afraid, and they said unto him, 'What is this that thou hast done?'

For the men knew that he was fleeing from the
11 presence of Jehovah, because he had told them. And they said unto him, 'What shall we do to thee that the sea may be calm for us?'

For the sea was becoming more and more stormy.
12 And he said unto them, 'Lift me up and hurl me into the sea, and the sea will be calm for you; for I know that it is on my account that this great storm is upon you'.

13 Then the men rowed hard to return to shore; but they could not, because the sea became more and
14 more stormy against them. Then they cried unto Jehovah, and said, 'O Jehovah, we beseech thee, let us not perish for the life of this man, and lay not upon us innocent blood; for thou, O Jehovah, doest as it pleaseth thee'.

15 Then they lifted up Jona and hurled him into the
16 sea; and the sea stopped its raging. And the men feared Jehovah with a great fear; and they offered a sacrifice to Jehovah, and made vows.

## Chap. II.

### JONA'S CANTICLE

II.

And Jehovah appointed a great fish to swallow 1
Jona; and Jona was in the fish's belly three days and
three nights. And Jona prayed to Jehovah his God 2
from the fish's belly.

And he said: 3

In my distress I called unto Jehovah,
And he answered me.
From the belly of Sheol I cried out,
And thou didst hear my voice.
Thou didst throw me into the deep, 4
Into the heart of the seas,
And the flood surrounded me;
All thy breakers and thy billows
Passed over me.

And I indeed said: 5
'I am cast out of the sight of thine eyes:
Howbeit again I look
At thy holy temple.

The waters encompassed me—even to my soul: 6
The deep surrounded me.
Seaweed was wrapped about my head:
I went down to the limits of Hades, 7
To a land whose bolts
Are eternal locks.
Yet thou didst bring my life up from the pit,
Jehovah, my God.

8 When my soul fainted within me,
I remembered Jehovah;
And my prayer came unto thee
Into thy holy temple.

9 Those who regard lying vanities
Forsake their mercy.
10 But I with a voice of thanksgiving
Offer sacrifice to thee:
I pay what I have vowed.
Salvation belongeth to Jehovah.

11 And Jehovah spoke unto the fish, and it vomited out Jona upon the dry land.

## Chap. III.

### THE REPENTANCE OF THE NINEVITES

III.
1 Now the word of Jehovah came unto Jona a second
2 time, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and denounce the denunciation which I am about to tell thee'.
3 And Jona arose and went to Nineveh in accordance with the word of Jehovah. Now Nineveh was a great city before God, of three days' walking.
4 And Jona began to go through the city, one day's walking; and he cried out and said, 'Yet three days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!'
5 And the men of Nineveh believed God; and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the
6 greatest to the least. And the tidings reached the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and took off his mantle, and covered himself with sack-

cloth and sat in ashes. And he had proclamation 7
made and said:

'In Nineveh, by decree of the king and his nobles:
Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock taste anything: let them neither graze nor drink water. But 8
let them be clothed with sackcloth, both man and beast, and let them cry mightily unto God; and let every one turn from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who knoweth but 9
that God may turn and have pity, and turn from the heat of his anger, that we may not perish?'

And God saw their works, that they turned from 10
their evil way. And God repented of the evil which he said he would do unto them; and he did it not.

## Chap. IV.

### JONA'S DISCONTENT

IV.

And Jona was exceedingly displeased and angry. 1, 2
And he prayed unto Jehovah and said, 'I beseech thee, O Jehovah, is not this what I said while I was yet on my own soil? Consequently I sought to forestall it by fleeing to Tarshish, because I knew that thou art a God gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy, and repenting of evil. And now, O Jehovah, take, I pray, my life from 3
me; for it is better for me to die than to live'.

And Jehovah said, 'Is it right for thee to be 4
angry?'

And Jona went out of the city, and sat at the east 5
of the city; and there he made a hut for himself, and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would happen in the city. And the Lord Jehovah appointed 6

a gourd, and made it come up over Jona, that it might be a shade over his head to deliver him from his vexation. And Jona was very glad indeed because
7 of the gourd. Then God appointed a worm when the dawn arose the next day, and it attacked the
8 gourd so that it withered away. And it came to pass, when the sun arose, that God appointed a scorching east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jona, and he swooned away. And he vowed his soul to death, saying, 'It is better for me to die than to live'.
9 And Jehovah said to Jona, 'Is it right for thee to be angry on account of the gourd?'

And he said, 'It is indeed right for me to be angry, even unto death'.

10 And Jehovah said, 'Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for which thou hast not toiled nor made it grow; which grew in a night and perished in a night.
11 But I, on my part, should I not have pity on the great city of Nineveh, wherein are more than sixscore thousand human beings who know not the right hand from the left, besides many beasts?'

# NOTES ON JONA

I. 1. In accordance with the preference of the general editor of the Westminster Version I employ the name 'Jehovah'. It is well known that this is certainly not the equivalent to the Hebrew Name: it was unknown to the Fathers, and, until our own times, was not found in Catholic commentaries. I should have preferred to write 'Yahwè', which, although not certain, is admittedly superior to 'Jehovah'. See note on Nahum i. 2. 'the word of Jehovah came'. Thereby Jona was a prophet. 'Jona the son of Amittay'. Obviously the writer would identify him with the person mentioned in II Kings xiv. 25. Had he meant us to take 'Jona' as 'Dove', a symbolical name of the Jews, he would not have added 'son of Amittay'.

2. 'go to Nineveh', 650 miles from Palestine. Founded (according to Gen. x. 11) by the Assyrian Nimrod, Nineveh was, at the time of Hammurabi, a colony of the Babylonian Empire. It rose to importance under Sennacherib (705—681 B.C.) and reached its zenith, as the first city of the world, at the time of Esar-haddon (681—669). Decline set in, and it fell to the Babylonians and Medes under Kyaxares in 612 B.C. The city was situated on the eastern bank of the Tigris. Its outer circuit may have measured 60 miles; but the city proper was about 8 miles in circumference. It was said that the walls were 100 ft. high, and broad enough to allow three chariots to run abreast. The site was discovered by Niebuhr in 1765; and excavations there continue to yield valuable results. See further the Introduction to Nahum, pp. xxxi—xxxiv. The modern Mosul is on the opposite bank of the Tigris.

LXX reads, 'the cry of their wickedness': *cf.* Gen. xviii. 20.

3. The prophet, it is true, now 'arose' as he had been bidden, but he took the opposite direction to Nineveh. He went down to the port of Jerusalem (Joppa: Hebrew 'Yofo': modern 'Jaffa') to find a ship going to the western extreme of the known world. 'Tarshish'. In all probability the 'Tartessus' known to Greeks and Romans—a Phœnician colony in Spain situated near the modern straits of Gibraltar. But the name was extended to include the whole of Spain. We read of 'ships of Tarshish' (Ps. xlviii. 8), meaning those that are strong enough to go the farthest distance. 'from the presence of Jehovah'. Jona's idea seems to have been that once away from Palestine he will no longer be subject to divine commands: *cf.* Gen. iv. 16: I Sam. xxvi. 19: II Kings v. 17: xiii. 23: xvii. 20: Jerem. xxiii. 39. 'with them', *i.e.*, with the sailors.

4. 'hurled': also i. 5, 12, 15. 'great wind'. LXX (probably correctly) omits 'great'. 'the ship was in danger': *lit.*, 'was minded to smash itself'.

5. 'mariners'. Word found only here and in Ezek. xxvii. The Hebrews (who were not a sea-going folk) borrowed it from the Assyrians. The sailors were pagans, probably of different nationalities since they prayed to various deities. Although their gods were false, they had a right belief in Divine Providence, as St. Jerome points out (*ignorantes veritatem, non ignorant providentiam*). 'vessel'. The word, only found here in O.T., means a *covered* ship, not an open boat; hence Jona could go below deck. He had descended there before the storm arose, and so did not feel its force, especially as he had fallen into a profound sleep. On this *tardema*, see Introduction, pp. xxx—xxxi. The pagans were praying while the disobedient Hebrew prophet was fast asleep! A *pagan* has to arouse the Hebrew to prayer!

6. The Hebrew is asked by the pagan to pray for divine mercy that the pagan sailors may not perish! This should be contrasted with Jona's subsequent attitude towards the pagans at Nineveh. The captain, however, did not know that Jona was a Hebrew (9): he does not bid him pray to Yahwè, but simply to 'thy God'.

7. The suddenness and violence of the storm lead the sailors to believe that there is somebody on board who has incurred the anger of a god. To find the culprit they cast lots. Other examples of casting lots in Sacred Scripture are found in Josue vii (Achan): I Sam. x. 20 (Saul): xiv. 42 (Jonathan): Luke xxiii. 34 (soldiers at the Crucifixion): Acts i (Matthias).

8. M.T. reads: 'Tell us, we beg of thee: *on whose account this disaster is upon us*'. The italicized words are not found in some Hebrew MSS., nor in the best MSS. of LXX, and are better omitted. They are practically a repetition of what has been said in the preceding verse; and as the lots had clearly indicated Jona as the culprit, there was no need for the question. The Vulgate gives them: *cujus causa malum istud sit nobis?* In the list of questions that follow, the Vulgate slightly deviates from the original: *'quod est opus tuum?* quae terra tua, et quo vadis? vel *ex quo populo es tu?* The lots revealed Jona as the object of divine wrath; but questions are asked in order to find out what is his sin and how the divinity may be placated.

9. 'I am a Hebrew' as Vulgate and M.T. The LXX reading, 'I am the servant of Yahwè' supposes *'eved Yahwè* instead of *'ivri*, that is, mistaking *resh* for *daleth* and reading the suffix as an abbreviation of the divine Name. Foreigners knew the Israelites as 'Hebrews': *cf.* Gen. xl. 15: Exod. ii. 7: iii. 18. 'I fear Jehovah'. In other words, 'my religion is the worship of Jehovah (Yahwè)'. In the O.T. the expression 'fear of God (or Yahwè)' is identical

with 'religion'. Jona is not afraid to acknowledge his religion before the pagan sailors, and he adds the expression, 'the God of heaven', *etc.*, to show that his God is no mere local deity. Indeed, as this same omnipotent God made the sea and the dry land, it is clear that He sent the storm.

10. The pagan sailors manifest great and reverential fear for the God of the Hebrew. Their remark, 'What is this that thou hast done', is rather an exclamation of dismay than a question (*cf.* Gen. iii. 13). There is no need to regard the words, 'For the men knew', *etc.*, as a gloss. The narrative hurries along, and the author summarizes the full conversation, of which part is given in i. 8—9.

11. Notice the kindliness of the pagans. They consult the man who has brought the trouble upon them as to what action they should take. 'for us'. A pregnant construction. It supposes 'that the sea may be calm *and cease from raging against us*'. So also in i. 12.

12. Jona willingly offers himself as a victim, for he realizes that by the sacrifice of himself the lives of the others may be saved. Both his own conscience and the thought that the casting of the lots was arranged by divine disposition led him to this decision.

13. 'rowed hard': *lit.*, '*digged*' (the oars into the water). The LXX reading, παρεβιάζοντο, 'used force', is probably the same as M.T. and Vulgate *remigabant*. Notice once more the kindliness and mercy of the pagans. Instead of throwing the Hebrew overboard, as he himself had requested, they prefer to attempt to get back to land. And when the storm defeats their efforts, they begin prayer to the Hebrew's God.

14. The divine Name 'Yahwè' on the lips of Gentiles is extraordinary. Usually the sacred writers (or their editors) will not allow pagans to utter the sublime Name but put *Elohim* instead (see Gen. iii: Num. xxii. 9: Ps. iii. 3, *etc.*). So in i. 6 (words of the captain) and in iii. 5—10 (5 times in the Nineveh part) *Elohim* is found. *Elohim* also occurs in iv. 2 (a quotation from Exod. xxxiv. 6), and three times in iv. 7—9 (but only once in Vulgate, which reads *Dominus* in iv. 8, 9). The combination *Yahwè-Elohim* is found in iv. 6. *Yahwè* is used (by M.T. and LXX) twenty-five times. We may learn from this how precarious it is to work out 'J & E. documents' in the O.T. The implication here in i. 14 is that the sailors are *converted* to the true God: *cf.* i. 16. 'Let us not perish', *etc.* Their prayer is for a solution of their dilemma. They do not want to be drowned, and at the same time are unwilling to throw Jona overboard, if that act would make them guilty of innocent blood. 'doest as it pleaseth thee'. Van Hoonacker, 'tu as agi selon ton bon plaisir!' Bewer, 'hast caused this according to Thy will'. But the expression seems more general: *cf.* Pss. cxv. 3: cxxxv. 6.

15. Immediately Jona is overboard the sea (likened to an angry

person) is appeased. Hence the thorough conversion of the sailors in the next verse.

16. Compare Mark iv. 40. Notice the conversion of these pagans to the true God, and compare with it the conversion of the Ninevites in iii. The 'fear' of Yahwè is not a dread, but religious awe and reverence. We need not suppose that they offered a sacrifice on the ship, but rather (as the Targum suggests) they resolved to offer sacrifice on their return. 'A resolution is often taken for its accomplishment' (Calmet). Probably they made vows to offer sacrifice at Jerusalem: *cf.* Pss. xxii. 26: lxv. 2: lxvi. 13: lxxvi. 12: cxvi. 14, 17—19.

II. 1. 'appointed', or 'ordained'; Vulgate *praeparavit*. The same verb is used in iv. 6, 7, 8 with reference to the gourd, the worm and the wind. Here it indicates that what happened was not by chance or according to the natural order of things, but by miraculous disposition of Divine Providence. 'a great fish'. No description is given of the *kind* of fish, but it is simply a *great* fish. The author is thinking of the miracle rather than of the species of sea-monster. 'three days and three nights'. The phrase is not to be taken literally; it is an expression of a short time, as in I Sam. xxx. 12: Esther iv. 16 (with v. 1): Hos. vi. 2. Here it indicates that the time was long enough to show that Jona was miraculously restored: he was more than one whole day in the fish's belly. See Matt. xii. 40: Our Lord was in the tomb one whole day and part of two other days.

2. No doubt Jona 'prayed to Jehovah' when flung overboard; but this is not to say that he composed the psalm in the fish's belly. There is no reference in the hymn to the fish. In the opinion of many modern commentators verse ii. 11 originally followed ii. 2. There is no reason, however, for supposing that the psalm is an interpolation. A second author would certainly have said something about the fish. But although the composition is Jona's, he would not have recited it in the fish's belly. Several of the titles of the psalms speak of David in this or that predicament (*e.g.*, Pss. xxxiv, lii, liv, lvi, lix); but they were written later, namely, when at the Tabernacle or Temple the singer offered his thanksgiving-sacrifice and made the votive offerings promised when he was in his distress (*cf.* Introd., p. xxiv). In these compositions the thought of being allowed to come again to the Temple alive is uppermost: *cf.* in Jona's psalm, verses 5, 8, 10. Moreover, the perfect forms of the verbs in the hymn probably show that it was written after the danger was over.

In his hymn Jona thanks God for answering his prayer uttered 'from the belly of Sheol'. He speaks of his drowning in the sea; at what time he remembered the Temple; and from there God heard his cry and brought him 'from the pit'. He deplores the sad state

of those who, not knowing the true God, worship worthless idols. He makes his thanksgiving in the Temple, offers the sacrifice, and fulfils the vows he had made.

3. With the first two lines *cf.* Pss. xviii. 7: cxx. 1. In M.T. better read prefix *beth* (as in the psalms: LXX here has ἐν θλίψει) instead of *mem*. The LXX has 'unto Jehovah *my God*' influenced, probably, by ii. 2; and in the third line reads a noun ('my cry') instead of verb. With the Vulgate we begin the fourth line with a conjunction. 'From the belly of Sheol'. If this expression is taken literally (and there is no conclusive reason against this) it can only mean that the person was already dead, his soul being actually inside Sheol. Those who would interpret it hyperbolically appeal to Pss. xvi. 10: xviii. 6: xxx. 4. But the first of these we would interpret in the Messianic sense found in the N.T.; or otherwise regard it as a pregnant expression: 'For thou wilt not abandon my soul *to give it* to Sheol'. The *cords of Sheol* of xviii. 6 do not signify capture from which there is no escape; for there is deliverance from these snares, *cf.* Pss. cxix. 61: cxl. 6. But in the Jona hymn the soul is in the innermost part ('belly') of Sheol. And in Ps. xxx. 4 the parallelism shows that, although on the brink of death, the psalmist had not actually died:

Yahwè, thou hast brought up my soul from Sheol:
Thou hast kept me alive from them that go down into the Pit.

We think, therefore, that there is much to be said for taking 'from the belly of Sheol' to mean that the singer actually experienced death. This is confirmed by what is said in ii. 7. And is not this what Christ meant when He gave the sign of Jona? That He was dead during part of three days is certain; but that this should find an exact parallel in Jona it is required that Jona was actually dead when swallowed by the fish.

4. Is he speaking literally or figuratively? Certain it is that engulfing waters, floods and breakers are used in Hebrew poetry to denote perils and tribulations; and the last two lines ('All thy breakers . . . over me') are figuratively used in Ps. xlii. 8: *cf.* also Pss. xviii. 5: lxix. 2—3: lxxxviii. 7—8: Lam. iii. 54. But as Jona was actually thrown into the sea, the literal explanation seems more reasonable, and this is confirmed by ii. 6. 'Thou didst throw me'. Actually the sailors threw him overboard, and at his own request; but Hebrew writers prefer primary to secondary causes. For the sake of metre some commentators omit 'the deep', others 'the heart of the seas'; but we know too little about Hebrew metre to take liberties with the text. 'flood': LXX reads plural ποταμοί.

5. 'I am cast out of the sight of thine eyes', that is, out of the land of the living, where the divine eyes exercise constant providence. *Cf.* Ps. xxxi. 23. The next lines refer to the present: the singer is actually back in the Temple; *cf.* the last line of ii. 8 and the

whole of ii. 10. There is a kind of antithetical refrain running through this thanksgiving-hymn.

6. We prefer to take the expressions literally. 'seaweed', in Hebrew *suf*. The 'Red Sea' was the *yam suf* or 'Sea of weeds'. So here Targum and Aquila wrongly think of the Red Sea. In Vulgate read *algae* rather than *pelagus*. The LXX and Old Latin read *sef* ('end') instead of *suf*, and wrongly divide the lines:

ἄβυσσος ἐκύκλωσέ με ἐσχάτη, ἕδυ
ἡ κεφαλή μου εἰς σχισμὰς ὀρέων.

It would appear that there was little life left in the drowning man: he is swallowed up by the waters; and the seaweed entangled about his head would choke his breathing.

7. 'to the limits of Hades', or else 'to the bases of mountains'. A difficult verse, which has given rise to a variety of interpretations. Some would connect 'the bases of mountains' with the preceding verse, thus:

Seaweed was wrapped about my head
At the bases of mountains.
I went down to a land . . .

What is meant by 'bases'? The root means 'cut off'; the noun is found only here and in I Kings vi. 25: vii. 37 (the cut shape of the cherubim figures), and Ecclus. xvi. 19 ('bases of mountains' as here, but the text is not quite certain). The LXX gives σχισμάς, *cuttings*, and Mr. G. R. Driver (JTS., 1934, Vol. 35, pp. 382—383), noting the cognate Arabic meaning 'pipe, channel, duct', suggests 'into the crevasses of the mountains'; but neither the verb nor the preposition go well with the idea of *passing through* crevasses of mountains to another land. A tempting solution is given by van Hoonacker. He corrects *harim* to *hades* (*daleth* and *resh*, and *samech* and final *mem* being often confused) and thinks of the 'cuttings' as the *mouth* of Hades. In view of ii. 3, 'belly of Sheol', we would prefer to refer it not to the top part of Sheol but to the bottommost part—hence 'limits of Hades'. This rendering of van Hoonacker, 'J'étais descendu aux bouches de l'Hadès', would make the line fit in excellently with the next lines, where 'the land' and 'the pit' both refer to Sheol. Against it, however, is not only the support of Ecclus. xvi. 19 to the existing Hebrew in Jona, but also the improbability of a Hebrew writer (at the time we date the book) using the word 'Hades'. Van Hoonacker remarks that a Jewish writer of the fifth century could have known the Greek word Hades; and that as the prophet was thrown overboard into Gentile waters, the writer of the canticle cleverly makes him descend into the Greek Sheol, that is, into Hades. We give the reading in the translation above, but with reserve. 'To a land'. LXX εἰς γῆν: insert a preposition in M.T. The 'land' is Sheol: *cf.*

Job x. 21, 22: xvii. 16: xxxviii. 17: Ps. xvi. 10. 'whose bolts are eternal locks'. Vulgate: (*terrae*) *vectes concluserunt me in aeternum*, and M.T.: 'her bolts against me for ever,' are to be corrected by LXX ἧς οἱ μοχλοὶ αὐτῆς κάτοχοι αἰώνιοι, *i.e.*, reading *badde* instead of *ba'adhi*: cf. Job xvii. 16. Surely this expression supposes that Jona actually entered Sheol, that is, that he was dead, when Yahwè restored him to life.

'thou didst bring my life up from the pit'. *Cf.* Pss. xxx. 4: ciii. 4: I Sam. ii. 6: Isai. xxxviii. 17. Had the hymn been composed in the fish's belly, these words could not have been spoken. The *pit* here is Sheol; but whereas in the references just given the singer refers to the gates of death, here (from what has already been said) the prophet seems to have come from death itself.

8. See Pss. xviii. 7: xxviii. 2. 'Into thy holy temple': the same phrase as at the end of ii. 5; hence it may be regarded as a refrain. The *temple* here is probably not heaven, as often in the Psalter, but the Temple at Jerusalem, where the singer is now making his act of thanksgiving.

9. This verse is spoken as an aside. Yahwè has heard the prayer of the prophet because he prayed to the true God. Heathens who worship worthless idols are turned away from the One who can have compassion on them. 'lying vanities' are idols: *cf.* Ps. xxxi. 7: Deut. xxxii. 21. 'their mercy', probably God, as in Ps. cxliv. 2. Van Hoonacker translates, 'Que les serviteurs des vanités futiles abandonnent leur Providence!'

10. These words are spoken in the Temple; hence we translate the verbs in the present rather than in the future tense. Like many of the psalms of the Psalter, this hymn is a votive-offering written and dedicated at the thanksgiving visit. Ps. cvii instructs those who have been delivered from dangers to offer their sacrifices and vows; and verses 23—32 remind us of Jona's experience in the storm. See also Ps. cxvi. 8—9. 'Salvation belongeth to Jehovah'. A Temple cry of praise: *cf.* Ps. iii. 9.

11. We have already suggested that this verse should be read after ii. 2.

III. 1. Two lessons are taught by this verse. (1) God's purpose is never frustrated; He desires the conversion of the Ninevites and is determined to send a preacher to them. (2) God is kind and forgiving. He might have rejected His prophet altogether after his former conduct. But no. Gently and mercifully He gives him another chance. It is well to remember that Jona is not quite alone in his shrinking from the divine commission: Moses had begged to be excused from going to Egypt (Exod. iii. 11: iv. 1, 13): Elias fled from Jezabel and prayed for death (I Kings xix): and Jeremiah pleaded his inability to denounce Jerusalem (i. 6).

2. 'denunciation', a word only found here in O.T.: BDB. gives

'proclamation', but a proclamation of ruin is a denunciation. LXX and the Old Latin read, 'which I told thee before'.

3. 'a great city before God'. A Hebrew way of saying 'a mightily great city': *cf.* Gen. x. 9, and expressions like 'cedars of God' (Ps. lxxx. 11), 'mountains of God' (Ps. lxviii. 16), 'wrestlings of God' (Gen. xxx. 8). The Vulgate has simply, *et Ninive erat civitas magna.* Nothing certain can be deduced to date the writing of the book from the expression, 'Nineveh *was* a great city'. Hebrew verbs in the perfect denote completeness rather than time.

'three days' walking'. It is not quite clear what the writer means. St. Jerome thought it measured the circumference; and as Diodorus (ii. 3) gives this at 480 *stadia* (roughly, furlongs), and a day's march was estimated at 125 *stadia* (Herodotus v. 53), the circumference may be meant. But iii. 4 seems to imply the diameter. Probably the writer would have us understand that it took three days to walk through all the streets. Or it may be a vague statement merely indicating that the city was extensive. It is estimated that it had a population of about 175,000. For a description of the wickedness of the city read Nahum iii.

Dom Lambert Nolle, O.S.B., kindly draws my attention to the pilgrimage of the people of Hebron to the supposed tomb of Moses. 'They usually encamp near the railway station at Jerusalem, and then pass slowly through the holy city. At each street corner they halt, and one or several of the leaders address the crowd of people who have gathered around. Thus it takes more than an hour to cover considerably less than a mile'.

4. The LXX and Old Latin have *three* days instead of *forty*. It is difficult to decide between the two; on the one hand LXX may have been influenced by iii. 3; on the other, the sudden repentance of the people suggests that the doom was proclaimed as almost imminent. After his preaching Jona did not wait forty days.

'shall be overthrown': the same word is used of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah: *cf.* Gen. xix. 21, 25: Deut. xxix. 23: Amos iv. 11, *etc.*

It is asked, in what language did Jona preach, and how could the Assyrians understand him? He may have spoken in Aramaic, the diplomatic language of the East. Or he may have learnt sufficient Assyrian for his mission. Or he may have spoken Hebrew. 'If Jonah's message consisted of five words, the translation of it would be a very easy thing. And the fact of the language being unknown would enhance the effect it produced. If we could picture ourselves as living under similar conditions, it would not take long for a message like "noch vierzig Tage, und London zerstört" to be intelligible throughout the length and breadth of London' (Lanchester in *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*).

5. What more natural than that seeing this strangely-attired foreigner calling out in the streets his message of doom with all the enthusiasm of prophetical certainty, the entire population should be moved profoundly? They believed in God—not necessarily in Yahwè, but in the Supreme Being that dominated all their minor gods. And they at once do penance—proclaiming a fast (a first measure in case of danger in Palestine and probably in all the East: *cf.* I Kings xxi. 9: II Chron. xx. 3: Joel i. 14) and put on sackcloth (a sign of repentance: *cf.* II Sam. iii. 31: Joel i. 13). Through the preaching of the Israelite, the Ninevites believed in God (*cf.* Gen. xv. 6), and that He rewarded good and punished evil; and that He was calling them to repentance. Thus, they fulfilled all the conditions that Catholic theology teaches are necessary for salvation in the case of those who have not received further revelation. *Cf.* Heb. xi. 6. Our Lord speaks of this repentance of the Ninevites in Matt. xii. 41: Luke xi. 32.

6. The fact that the name of the king is not given is adduced against the historical worth of the narrative. But how often the king of such and such a place is mentioned in Sacred Scripture (in admittedly historical books) without designation of his name! Note the omission in Nahum ii. 8. Would a foreign paper to-day be suspect for mentioning 'the King of England' without adding 'George'? 'sat in ashes': a sign of humility: *cf.* Job ii. 8.

7. Van Hoonacker makes the verbs indefinite in subject, and sees the beginning of the decree at 'Let neither man'. ('Puis l'on cria dans Nineve et l'on ordonna, par décret du roi et de ses grands, en ces termes: "Hommes et animaux. . ."') Either rendering will stand.

'decree'. The word is only found here in a Hebrew passage of the Bible, and tells in favour of the historical value of the narrative. For its use in Aramaic passages, *cf.* Esdras iv. 19, 21: Dan. iii. 10, 29, *etc.* 'and his nobles': *cf.* Dan. vi. 17. 'beast', domestic animal. The fast is imposed on them not as though they had sinned, but because they owe their preservation to Divine Providence: see Pss. xxxvi. 8—9: cxlvii. 9: Jerem. xxi. 6: Joel i. 20. The tie between man and his beasts was stronger among the Orientals than it is among us. Moreover, the tending of the flocks would distract the men from their prayers and penance. See Herodotus (ix. 24) for the part taken by the horses and beasts in the Persian army at the mourning of Masiastius.

8. 'both man and beast'. Some commentators consider this a gloss, due to repetition from verse 7; but it is not improbable that the animals were covered with mourning apparel, as horses are clothed at funerals in some countries to-day. The subject of 'let them cry' is obviously 'men'. Notice the thoroughness of the re-

pentance: fasting, sackcloth, prayer and amendment. The prayer is addressed *to God*—not 'to Yahweh' (Bewer). 'violence that is in their hands' (*lit.*, palms): violent assault is primarily meant.

9. 'turn and have pity', or, 'again have pity': the latter would imply that the Ninevites had done penance to obtain the mercy of the Supreme God on a former occasion; but as there is no record of this, the former is to be preferred. *Cf.* Joel ii. 14.

10. 'God repented'. *Cf.* Gen. vi. 6: Exod. xxxii. 14: Jerem. xviii. 8: Amos vii. 3, 6. God does not really change (*cf.* I Sam. xv. 29); but anthropomorphically He can be said to 'repent', when He has decreed punishment conditionally, and man repents.

IV. 1. St. Jerome thought that Jona was displeased, not because the Ninevites were spared, but because he saw in their salvation the rejection of the Jews (P.L. 25. 1145). But the main cause of his anger seems to have been wounded self-love. He had foretold the destruction of the city, but now his prediction had proved false. It had not entered his head that the Ninevites would do penance. He would have gloated over the extermination of a people that he and his fellow-Jews held in abomination. We are to learn from this sacred book that private interest must give way to public good; also that God's prophets and preachers are merely His instruments, and must submit their personal feelings and judgements to His wiser ruling.

2. 'Is not this what I said while I was yet on my own soil?' Some think that he is now afraid that the Ninevites will turn on him and kill him; and that for that very reason he took ship to Tarshish on the former occasion. But a better interpretation would be that he fled the first time because he knew that God was gracious and compassionate, and so would pardon his flight: but he never suspected that He would be gracious and compassionate towards the hated heathen.

'I sought to forestall it'. This seems the better rendering, but the Hebrew will allow: 'I sought on the former occasion to flee'.

'a God gracious and compassionate', *etc.* Jona would know this from his reading of the Law; see Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. *Cf.* also Pss. ciii. 8: cxlv. 8: Joel ii. 13.

3. Moses made a like prayer when tired at heart of the complaints of his people (Num. xi. 15): Elias, also, when his efforts against wickedness seemed in vain (I Kings xix. 4). Our Lord, in His agony, prayed that the chalice of suffering might pass, if His Father so willed. St. Paul felt a longing for death—to be with Christ (Phil. i. 23). But these all spoke with holy resignation, whereas Jona (as the next verse proves) speaks from wounded pride. His prediction has not been fulfilled; he never wants to be sent on another mission. So God addresses him with a reprimand, kind but searching.

4. God's rebuke is gentle: 'Are you reasonably angry?' No reply is given by the sullen prophet. Later he replies (iv. 9), whereupon he is given to understand why God was reasonably merciful to the Ninevites.

5. It is thought that this verse is misplaced, that it should come after iii. 4. Another suggestion is to read the verbs as pluperfects: 'Jona had gone out . . . and had made'. Others regard the verse as a clumsy interpolation. But the best sense is that Jona regarded Yahwè's gentle remonstrance as an indication that after all He would destroy the city. People in sullen mood are apt to catch at any straw to satisfy their temper. Again, he might have gone into his hut simply to see what would happen in the city, that is, whether the repentance would be lasting.

'at the east of the city'. He had now traversed the city, and probably sat down on one of the hills outside the city on the east. 'a hut', of branches, such as was used by Israelites for the Feast of Tabernacles. 'till he might see'. He appears to think that because of his complaint (iv. 3) God will yet bring his prediction to reality. He had yet to learn the lesson of God's mercy, by means of an object-lesson.

6. It would appear that Jona's hand-made hut of trellis-work (see representations in catacombs) was not sufficient to protect him from the sun. In His kindness God provides more secure shelter. 'a gourd': *cf.* Tristram, *The Natural History of the Bible*, pp. 449—450. The choice seems to be between the bottle-gourd (so apparently LXX) and the castor-oil plant known as *ricinus*. St. Jerome translated *hedera* (D.V. 'ivy'), remarking, however, that this was inexact, but that he adopted it from ancient translators (Symmachus and others) because he knew of no Latin equivalent for the real shrub (which he obviously from his description takes to be the *ricinus* or castor-oil plant).

'his vexation': either his bad temper or the troublesome glare of the sun, or both. D.V. 'for he was fatigued' does not convey the right sense. 'was very glad indeed': but there is no mention of his thanking God for the favour. Everything for his self-satisfaction!

8. 'scorching'. The Hebrew word occurs nowhere else and many guesses are made at its precise meaning. But LXX, Vulgate, Syriac, all understand '*burning, scorching*' (πνεύματι καύσωνι συγκαίοντι : *vento calido et urenti*; but the first adjective, in Hebrew *qadim*, means *East*). Probably a hot wind (like the sirocco) is meant. Those who have experienced the sirocco know how oppressive it can be and how trying to the temper. So Jona suffers further discomfort, and with it falls a victim to still greater petulance and misery. A second time, therefore, he prays for death. *Cf.* Elias's prayer in I Kings xix. 4. 'beat': the same verb as in the preceding verse: the worm 'attacked' the plant, and the sun attacked or 'beat' upon

the head of Jona. So also the plant 'withered away' and Jona 'swooned away', but here the verbs are different.

'vowed his soul to death'. This seems to be the meaning of the sentence: see van Hoonacker and the passages he quotes in support. Less strongly: 'he wished for himself that he might die' (Bewer). 'It is better', *etc.*, as in verse 3 above.

9. 'Jehovah' (so read with Vulgate instead of M.T. 'God') puts the same question in iv. 4. Then Jona was angry because Nineveh was *not* destroyed, here he is very angry because the plant *is* destroyed (Bewer). Jona's reply shows how self-concern can make a soul rebel impiously against the voice of God. 'even unto death' may be a superlative meaning *exceedingly*: *cf.* Judges xvi. 16.

10. The moral. Notice the Divine Name, Yahwè, indicating that the God of the Hebrews is speaking to a Hebrew. The argument is *a fortiori*. Overlooking the prophet's irreverent reply, God gently takes Jona's pity for the destruction of the plant to point out where greater pity should be given. Jona is sorry that the plant is no more; yet he did not work to produce it nor did he make it grow. It had only an ephemeral existence. Good! But how much better to save from destruction a great city with a teeming population including thousands that are innocent, and beasts that have harmed no one!

'in a night', *lit.*, 'son of a night': the Hebrew method of reckoning age.

11. 'sixscore thousand human beings who know not the right hand from the left'. The meaning is that there is this number who have not come to the use of reason, that is, who are not morally responsible. Some would restrict it to infants up to the age of about two years, and then argue that this gives a ridiculously high figure for the total population. But there is no reason why the figure should not include all children up to the age of seven years and even older. 'besides many beasts'. Notice God's care for irrational animals. Our Lord reminds us that not one sparrow falls to the ground without the loving knowledge of God. The conclusion is that God is not the God of the Hebrews only but of all men, whom He loves, to whom He is always ready to show mercy, and whom He wills should be saved from their sins. *Cf.* Wisdom xi. 23—26. 'The author naturally does not tell the reader how Jona received the lesson, nor what happened to him afterwards. The lesson itself is the intrinsic ending of the book' (van Hoonacker).

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'Ipsa libri versio anglica et notae, non mediocriter amplae, indoli et fini totius operis egregie respondent.'

'A.V.' in *Verbum Domini* (Rome).

'To the *Westminster Version of the Sacred Scriptures* Father Cuthbert Lattey now adds a short commentary on Ruth. There is a very good introduction on the Go'el, and a discussion in favour of emending into *lahem* ("for them", *i.e.*, the sons) the word *lahen* in i. 13, the one word which, as S. R. Driver observed, is "most difficult to reconcile with an early date".'

Prof. S. A. Cook in the *Journal of Theological Studies*.

# NAHUM AND HABAKKUK

## BY DOM HUGH BÉVENOT, O.S.B.

'Par cette traduction nouvelle de Nahum et d'Habacuc, l'édition anglaise de la Bible, connue sous le nom de "Westminster Version", s'enrichit d'un travail d'exégèse critique qui fait honneur à la science catholique. Par les soins du R.P. Bévenot, O.S.B., le texte est minutieusement examiné et discuté; les prophéties elles-mêmes sont mises dans leur cadre historique, et une traduction, dont la netteté est accentuée encore par des notes donnant un commentaire détaillé, rend autant que possible l'allure souvent rythmée du texte original.

'Une mort inopinée avait malheureusement empêché l'auteur de mettre la dernière main à son œuvre. Le R.P. Lattey, S.J., directeur de la "Westminster Version", sollicité par les confrères bénédictins du défunt, se chargea de combler les lacunes. Il l'a fait avec une discrétion parfaite en s'inspirant des idées du R.P. Bévenot lui-même. Très en particulier il a utilisé la belle et très pénétrante étude que celui-ci avait fait paraître sur "le Cantique d'Habacuc" dans la *Revue Biblique* des PP. Dominicains de Jérusalem, octobre 1933.

'La tendance des deux exégètes est sagement progressiste et témoigne d'une loyauté parfaite dans les recherches scientifiques'.

'C.H.' in the *Nouvelle Revue Théologique.*

'On trouvera, pour ce qui concerne Nahum et Habacuc, d'utiles informations dans l'Introduction et les notes dont le regretté Dom Hughes Bévenot accompagne leur texte dans la traduction de Westminster. Dans la préface l'éditeur retrace la brillante carrière littéraire de celui qui fut notre collaborateur et notre ami, et dont on aimera à admirer ici encore la vaste culture et l'esprit distingué'. 'L.-M.D.' in the *Revue Biblique.*

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Fr. Richard Kehoe, O.P., in *Blackfriars.*

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